

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL

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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete.

ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE PAYMENTS

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays an annual clothing allowance to a veteran who has a service-connected (SC) disability or condition that requires the veteran to wear or use a prosthetic or orthopedic device that wears out or tears clothing. VA may also pay the annual clothing allowance to a veteran if he/she uses medication prescribed by a physician for a SC skin condition, which causes irreparable damage to the veteran's outer garments. Approval of a claim based on use of medication requires a medical determination. A skin condition requiring use of medication is not considered static and a re-determination is required each year. Irreparable damage does not include stains that are removable through regular laundering or dry cleaning.

The application form for the clothing allowance is VAF 10-8678 APPLICATION FOR ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE. However, a claim for the clothing allowance may be any communication from a veteran that describes the device or medication used because of a service-connected disability/condition, and requests payment of the clothing allowance.

In August 2003, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) transitioned the processing of annual clothing allowance claims to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Clothing allowance claims should be forwarded to the VA Medical Center (VAMC) or Outpatient Clinic (OPC) of jurisdiction, for the attention of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service.

To be eligible for the 2009 clothing allowance, the veteran must be found to meet the eligibility requirements on August 1, 2009. At the end of July 2009 computer-generated letter/applications are issued to veterans whose records are set to require annual redetermination of clothing allowance eligibility. Veterans have until July 31, 2010, to apply for the 2009 clothing allowance.

The 2009 clothing allowance payments for veterans who have been authorized recurring payments and for others whose awards are input on or before the last processing

cycle of August will be issued on September 1. Payments authorized after the last processing cycle of August will be made by out-of-system payment processing and should go out about 7 - 10 days after authorization.

The 2009 clothing allowance is \$716.00. Veterans who are receiving their compensation payments by direct deposit will receive the clothing allowance payment by direct deposit. Veterans without direct deposit will receive their clothing allowance payments by check to the same address as their compensation payments.

A veteran receiving military retired pay is not required to waive any portion of his/her retired pay to receive the clothing allowance.

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS: THE POST 9/11 GI BILL

(VA News Release) WASHINGTON, DC – On August 1, President Obama celebrated the beginning of implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. This bill, through its Yellow Ribbon Programs and partnerships with colleges and universities throughout the nation, will provide our service members with the most generous educational benefits package since the original GI Bill of 1944. The maximum benefit under the Post-9/11 GI Bill allows veterans, service members, Reservists and Guard members the ability to receive an in-state, undergraduate education at a public institution at no cost.

Over 3,400 agreements were received from the 1,100 schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program. The Yellow Ribbon Program, a provision of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, funds tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. For information on specific schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon program, go to www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/YRP/YRP_List.htm.

Additional information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon program, as well as VA's other educational benefits, can be obtained by visiting VA's Web site www.gibill.va.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551).

Further, to honor their many sacrifices, the Post 9/11 GI Bill allows for the transferability of unused benefits to eligible career service members' families. More information on the transferability of unused benefits can be found at http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2009/0409_gibill/

VETERANS AFFAIRS HELPS VETERAN SMALL-BUSINESS OWNERS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – More than 1,000 Veterans who own small businesses and seek to do more contracting with the federal government recently heard Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki extol the importance of small businesses and reaffirm the commitment of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help veterans start or expand their companies. "If Veterans tell us their definition of success, we'll put our capabilities behind them," Secretary Shinseki said July 21 at the government-sponsored National Veteran Small Business Conference in Las Vegas.

Speaking at the largest annual conference to help Veteran-owned and service-disabled Veteran-owned firms do business with the federal government, he encouraged potential suppliers to seek VA's business, telling them his Department leads the government in prime-contract dollars spent with businesses owned by service-disabled Veterans and other Veterans. He said last year VA spent more than \$2 billion with Veteran-owned small businesses – 15 percent of its procurement dollars, up 5 percent from the previous year. Of that amount, \$1.6 billion – or 12 percent of VA's purchasing -- was spent with service-disabled Veteran-owned businesses.

Even though VA has exceeded government-wide goals for supporting Veteran-owned small businesses, Secretary Shinseki said VA should raise its support for them even higher. VA will set goals to increase Veteran subcontractors' work for VA, as well. To help Veterans win bids and perform the work successfully, he said VA is launching contractor certification training to explain the complexities of federal contracting. The VA secretary said he has urged other presidential Cabinet departments to increase contract opportunities for Veterans.

Secretary Shinseki said the nation's defenders earned the right to participate in all taxpayer-funded contracts. He urged Veteran entrepreneurs to find ways to assist men and women returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan to find meaningful work, saying "We'll do our part at VA, but we can't do it all."

VA has a special unit, the Center for Veterans Enterprise, which offers a variety of services to Veterans wanting to start or expand a business. These include one-on-one coaching, referrals for business training, listing in an online database for potential clients and verification of the Veteran status of those registrants.

More information about the Department's services to the owners of small businesses is available on the Internet at www.va.gov/oamm.

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

VA Health Revenue Service (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -
CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023
CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 352-793-7740
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 33467 561-649-6489
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 32218 904-358-3510
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:

www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete

Property Management (sale of VA-reposessed homes):

www.ocwen.com

Federal employment: www.usajobs.opm.gov

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: www.floridavets.org

"Florida Vets First:" www.FloridaVetsFirst.com

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov